The internationalization of environmental protection

Edited by

Miranda A. Schreurs

and

Elizabeth Economy

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Elizabeth Economy and Miranda A. Schreurs

Introduction

In Lynton Caldwell's extensive historical account of the development of international agreements for environmental protection, he points to the 1972 United Nations Conference on the Human Environment (the Stockholm Conference) as the turning point in the development of a new paradigm in environmental thinking. As Caldwell writes,

> The Stockholm Conference was a watershed in international relations. It legitimized environmental policy as a universal concern among nations, and so created a place for environmental issues on many national agendas where they had been previously unrecognized ... [T]he growth of international environmental cooperation during the 1970s and thereafter is an aspect of a larger social transition. It is an expression of a changing view of mankind's relationship to the earth.[1]

Pollution of the atmosphere, species loss, nuclear power safety, and ocean and sea pollution are some of the problems that are transforming the nature of international politics. As these issues become more and more pressing, the boundaries of states are increasingly blurred. The inefficient use of coal or the inability to treat a communicable disease in one state not only ravages that state's environment and populace but also has direct and frequently dramatic ramifications for other states. Individual states are ill-equipped to respond alone to the myriad challenges posed by transboundary environmental, social, and health problems. As the rapid growth in the number of international environmental agreements since the 1970s attests, the resolution of these types of problems requires extensive cooperation and coordination among states in the formulation and implementation of policies. The United Nations Environment Program (UNEP) has a register that lists close to 200 multilateral environmental agreements or amendments to existing

agreements, most of which have been established since the Stockholm Conference. Edith Brown-Weiss has estimated that there were over 900 bilateral and multilateral environmental agreements by the early 1990s.[2]

This represents a major change from the past. Until a few decades ago, environmental policy formation and implementation were primarily local or national matters. In the pre- and immediate post-World War II periods, there were some bilateral environmental agreements to deal with localized transboundary pollution problems and even some international environmental agreements for the preservation of migratory species or the control of nuclear testing. Still, these were exceptional cases. In most instances, environmental policy outcomes were determined primarily by actors within a single state.

In contrast, contemporary environmental politics is a truly global affair. By the time of the United Nations Conference on the Environment and Development (UNCED) in 1992, the international community as a whole evidenced a broader understanding of the complexity and international scope of many environmental problems. This internationalization of environmental politics is transforming the relationship among actors within and among states. Today, international organizations, multinational corporations, international environmental groups, international expert groups (sometimes known as "epistemic communities"), multilateral banks, and other governmental and non-governmental organizations play a central role in influencing environmental policy outcomes. Agenda setting, policy formulation, and implementation are becoming increasingly internationalized.

This volume is concerned with how the internationalization of environmental politics has affected domestic political institutions and policy-making processes. A second and related focus is on the influence of domestic policy priorities on international environmental negotiations. The chapters in this volume are based on extensive interviews and empirical data collection. They explore and contrast how the internationalization of environmental policy-making influences and has been influenced by structures and processes at the domestic or supranational level. The chapters analyze international environmental policy formation in the People's Republic of China, Japan, Germany, the former Soviet Union and its successor states, the United Kingdom, the United States, and Zimbabwe. Because of the special nature of environmental policy-making within Europe, there is also a chapter on the European Union. Our environmental cases include global climate change, biodiversity, stratospheric ozone depletion, trade in endangered species,

and acid rain. The chapters examine changes over time in the reaction of states and the European Union to international environmental problems. Importantly, they all find that environmental policy-making processes have been altered by participation in international environmental negotiations. At the same time, they all point to the power that individual states possess to influence the direction or effectiveness of international environmental protection initiatives and call for a more nuanced understanding of international environmental policy formation than many accounts provide.

Each of the authors of this study was asked to explore how, why, and when international linkages matter in shaping domestic policy-making and influencing policy outcomes on transnational or global environmental issues. Our findings suggest that the emergence of new international environmental problems and new coalitions of actors has indeed influenced policy formation and implementation processes at the domestic level. The internationalization of environmental politics has injected new ideas about environmental problems and policy solutions and financial and technical resources into domestic political debates. In some cases, it has altered existing power balances among coalitions operating in the sub-state and international arenas. In other cases, it has provided individual states and sub-state actors with new avenues through which to influence environmental policy debates at the international level. Importantly, however, the international community is not always effective at reaching down into the state to alter domestic politics. If the international community lacks the tools – either financial or educational – to recruit support from the key economic and industrial actors, cooperation is unlikely.

For a volume concerned with the internationalization of environmental politics, our approach is admittedly state-centric. This is intentional. Although the contributors to this volume recognize the growing importance of non-state actors in the international system, we are concerned less with the organization, goals or activities of these new actors than we are with their impact on the state. The contributors to this volume share a belief that not enough empirical work has focused on the question of how international actors and the internationalization of environmental science and politics, more generally, has affected the role of the state in environmental policy formation. The state remains a powerful actor in international politics and continues to play a central role in the establishment and enforcement of domestic environmental laws and international environmental agreements.[3] It is therefore important

to understand how the state is influenced by the emergence of new kinds of international environmental problems and the socio-political changes that have accompanied them. It is also important to understand how states are using the internationalization of environmental politics to forward their own policy priorities.

This volume joins a growing body of literature that seeks to bridge the study of international relations and comparative politics.[4] The comparative environmental politics literature points to the importance of domestic political institutions, cultural factors, scientific traditions, interest group politics, and social movements in agenda setting and implementation.[5] In contrast, international relations scholars have focused their attention on international environmental policy formation and its implementation.[6] This literature considers the importance of power relations among states and inter-state bargaining;[7] the ideas held by communities of experts;[8] and treaty design in explaining successes and failures in international environmental cooperation efforts.[9] In addition, there is growing interest in the influence of non-state actors, including international organizations, multilateral corporations, and international non-governmental organizations in policy formation.[10]

Through empirical case studies, this volume draws on and critiques the theoretical insights provided by these schools. Like earlier comparative work it focuses on how domestic political institutions and cultures affect the agenda-setting process and policy implementation at the domestic level. In addition, it draws on international relations theory by focusing on how inter-state negotiations, epistemic communities, and international institutions have introduced new ideas about environmental problems and policy solutions and financial and technical resources into national policy debates. In so doing, this volume joins others in the field of environmental politics that aim to understand the role of domestic politics in international relations.[11]

The volume is also strongly influenced by other bodies of literature. Many of the chapters in the volume follow arguments originating in the state institutionalist literature. This work argues that *domestic* political, social, and economic institutions matter in international relations. Institutions are important because they can structure the relationships among actors in society, influence their preferences, and channel how ideas are brought into domestic decision-making processes.[12] Domestic political institutions can mitigate the effectiveness of international efforts to alter domestic policy priorities and regulations. Institutions tend to be persistent, but occasionally they do change. This may be the

result of exogenous factors (as in the case of the major political transformations in the former Soviet Union); institutional change at the domestic level may also occur, however, because of international efforts to bring about such change.

Our work is similar to studies in the field of political economy that have examined how domestic institutions influence national responses to international crises or international developments. This literature too recognizes the importance of domestic institutions in shaping power relations and influencing the priorities of actors, but in the tradition of the "second image reversed" also points to the importance of the position of domestic actors within the international political economy. Actor preferences and behavior can be influenced by their international position.[13] As Robert Keohane and Helen Milner have argued, internationalization also affects the policy preferences of economic and political actors domestically, and this in turn influences national policy formation and even the shape of domestic institutions.[14]

The internationalization of environmental politics

Before continuing, it is helpful to consider what we mean by the internationalization of environmental politics. At its most basic level, the internationalization of environmental politics is a response to the emergence of new types of environmental issues. In recent decades, a new class of environmental problems that are transnational, regional, or even global in scale have emerged. In some cases, this simply reflects a new understanding of the regional or global impacts of local activities. It is now understood, for example, that coal-fired power plants in Beijing contribute not only to local air pollution but also to acid rain in Japan as well as global climate change. There is also growing acceptance of the idea that species loss in one region of the world is a matter of global concern because of the still unknown consequences of large-scale losses in biodiversity. Many old environmental problems are now viewed in new ways.

In other cases, environmental problems have become more international because the internationalization of the economy has intensified pressures on local ecological systems. Trade in elephant ivory in Asia, Europe, and North America has contributed to the decimation of elephant populations in Africa. The demand for hardwood in the North has been an important factor in deforestation in tropical states. Environmental degradation in eastern Germany is, in part, related to

the transport of waste to this region from the former Federal Republic of Germany. In these cases, environmental issues are internationalized because multiple states have played a role in environmental degradation in a given region of the world.

Finally, new kinds of environmental issues that are global in scale have also been discovered. It is now known that the use of chlorofluorocarbons (CFCs) as a common propellant in spray cans, as a cleaning solvent, and as a refrigerant caused damage to the protective ozone layer in the earth's upper atmosphere. There is also a growing scientific consensus that the burning of fossil fuels is contributing to changes in average global temperatures, or what is commonly known as "global warming." These issues are now widely accepted as issues that require international cooperation if they are to be solved.

The internationalization of environmental policy formation, however, is not just a matter of states responding to the emergence of new kinds of problems or new ways of viewing old ones. The internationalization of environmental politics also reflects the efforts by international actors and institutions to reach down into the state to set domestic policy agendas and influence policy formation and implementation processes.

International actors may attempt to influence scientific or expert discourse within states. There are a growing number of international linkages among environmental non-governmental organizations (NGOs), scientists, and policy experts. Peter Haas argues that transnational expert groups, or what he calls, "epistemic communities," have emerged around specific policy concerns, such as Mediterranean Sea pollution or stratospheric ozone depletion. These expert communities may link scientists, bureaucrats, journalists, and representatives of NGOs who share a common concern and expertise about an issue. Epistemic communities can play a very important role in introducing scientific concerns about an environmental issue into domestic policy debates.[15]

Linkages among states and between actors at the domestic and international level are established through participation in international organizations, the creation of networks among environmental organizations, the activities of multinational corporations, scientific conferences, international political gatherings, the media and telecommunications. International organizations and institutions like the United Nations, the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), or the World Bank bring actors together to address specific environmental issues and to share knowledge, technical expertise, and financial

resources. The European Union is another important actor linking actors within states.

The rise in the number of international organizations and interest groups – only some of which emerged in response to international environmental issues – has facilitated the transfer of ideas about policy problems and solutions across national borders. Scientists participating in international conferences have brought new ideas to domestic audiences about how human activities impact on ecological systems. International environmental organizations have formed links with nationally based groups to help spread information about environmental problems and to apply pressures for policy change across national borders. The media has acted as a rapid transmitter of news about environmental disasters. International meetings, such as UNCED, have helped to bring environmental issues to the attention of policy-makers around the world. Through these linkages, the internationalization of environmental policy formation is making states richer in shared knowledge and more aware of the need for cooperation in environmental protection efforts.

Important resources can be transferred from the international to the domestic level through these linkages. These may include, for example, knowledge about the causes and consequences of environmental degradation and technical know-how in the form of computer models, monitoring technology, or energy efficiency strategies. The linkages can promote the exchange of data on such issues as greenhouse gas emissions, the nature of Baltic Sea pollutants, or treaty infractions by a state that is party to an international environmental accord. The internationalization of environmental politics has led to the transfer of funds for environmental protection to developing states, and it has also become a means by which more abstract ideas or values concerning the environment, such as sustainability, North–South equity issues, or concerns of inter-generational responsibility have gained recognition in different national settings.

The extent to which linkages form between actors within a state and actors operating internationally are strongly influenced by the domestic political system. Thus, some of the states we examine have only weak linkages to the international system while others have extensive linkages that have existed for long periods. The end of the Cold War has opened the way at the international level for greater contact among actors in the East and West. Yet, the effectiveness of these linkages is strongly mitigated by domestic politics.

Implications for environmental policy: evidence from the case studies

The case studies in this book illustrate that indeed the internationalization of environmental politics and the emergence of new linkages between the domestic and international levels have encouraged new ways of thinking about environmental problems and policy responses. Multinational corporations helped define the policy debate in the United States and the United Kingdom in the case of the Montreal Protocol. The Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES) put elephant protection on Zimbabwe's political agenda despite considerable initial domestic apathy and opposition. Events leading up to UNCED elevated levels of concern about air pollution and global climate change in the People's Republic of China. European concerns about transboundary air pollution helped put acid rain onto the former Soviet Union's list of environmental policy problems.

The chapters contend, however, that the effectiveness of linkages in promoting cooperation among states in addressing large-scale environmental problems is strongly mitigated by domestic political and economic structures and institutions. Analyses at the state level highlight the important role played by the different interests of sub-state actors in shaping how a state responds to international pressures for cooperation in environmental protection. The ways in which events at the international level are perceived and defined by relevant policy actors as means for pushing their respective policy priorities greatly influence national responses to international environmental problems. Where the goals of the international community can be effectively linked to the goals of powerful sub-state actors, early cooperation is often the result. Where the goals of the international community are not seen as an effective means for pushing sub-state policy priorities, cooperation is often limited. For politicians involved in international negotiations, it is often necessary to push for a shift in the international debate before participation in an international environmental agreement becomes politically palatable back home. For domestic advocates of environmental protection it is often not until international linkages are successful in legitimizing their demands that political change becomes possible.

In some cases, domestic interest in environmental protection encourages the formation of a cooperative stance. In Germany, for example, the political process permitted and supported the emergence of a strong Green Party. Once this party gained electoral representation and green

issues became more important to Germany's established political parties, Germany became a "primary force" in pushing the European Community on the introduction of a Large Combustion Plant Directive and later in the cases of stratospheric ozone depletion and global climate change.

At the same time, the linking of domestic policy concerns with global environmental problems may lead to improvements in domestic environmental protection while not necessarily producing a more cooperative stance on the international environmental issue. In chapter 2, Elizabeth Economy finds that the establishment in China of a leading group to study and develop policy alternatives on global climate change offered the opportunity for the more powerful planning, industrial, and foreign affairs agencies to wrest control of the policy process from the environmental and scientific ministries. Not surprisingly, the outcome of the domestic negotiations resulted in policy prescriptions that reflected these conservative interests.

Similarly, new ideas about environmental protection are often initially rejected by powerful coalitions who feel threatened by the implications of policy change or new environmental paradigms. The phasing out of CFCs and other ozone depleting substances was initially rejected by powerful industrialists in the United States, United Kingdom, and elsewhere who felt economically threatened by environmental protection initiatives. In most cases, the critical domestic actors opposing regulation are the relevant economic interests. Industrial interests typically represent the most powerful actors in the state because they can provide jobs and contribute to a nation's GNP. Their leaders are often well-situated politically as well. Unless they see incentives in cooperation, industrial actors often possess the power to stymie even the most obvious of cooperative endeavors. In Russia, for example, in the wake of Chernobyl, the nuclear power industry resisted involvement by the West because it was afraid that its control over the industry would be undermined.

The power of economic incentive is great. As Joanne Kauffman notes in chapter 4, DuPont became a proactive participant in encouraging the establishment of the Montreal Protocol when it determined that a level regulatory playing field – which could be established only by an international agreement – would "create new markets for more expensive substitutes that only large well-financed corporations could develop." Kal Raustiala (chapter 3) finds in the case of the United States that once the major pharmaceutical and biotechnology firms were persuaded that

the biodiversity treaty would not be "dangerous" to their profitability, they threw their support behind the treaty and enabled the Clinton administration to be environmentally proactive without "appearing to sign away American interests in jobs."

The threat of sanction or economic loss has also proved a powerful force in engendering cooperation. According to Angela Liberatore (chapter 8), the introduction of environmental regulation within the European Community was due mainly to economic factors. The European Community wanted to avoid distortion of competition within its member states and to maintain access to foreign markets which might use environmental legislation as a barrier to entry. In China, industry saw no advantages in joining an international accord on global climate change. In the case of stratospheric ozone depletion, however, various industries feared that their market for consumer goods in Asia would be sharply constricted if they did not sign the Montreal Protocol. This same economic rationale emerged in the case of Japan; the Ministry of International Trade and Industry (MITI) finally gave in to the pressure to sign the Montreal Protocol once trade sanctions were considered by the United States.

International linkages can influence these cost-benefit analyses by changing resource balances among actors, altering actors' interests or perceptions, or providing means for pushing other policy priorities. Often this is done through the transfer of funds, technology, and know-how. As Miranda Schreurs remarks in chapter 6, when Japan's politicians, bureaucrats, and economic leaders began to see in global warming a way to promote technological innovation, their attitudes towards participation in an international environmental agreement changed. In chapter 7, Phyllis Mofson finds that when Zimbabwe's political leaders determined that non-participation in CITES could be more costly than participation because non-participation could invite economic sanctions, protection of the African elephant was put on the domestic political agenda. In the United States a change in administration altered the balance between actors in favor of and opposed to the Biodiversity Convention and produced a climate more favorable to the policy change being sought by international actors.

Even wealthier states often balk at environmental cooperation unless adequate financial incentive or risk is demonstrated. Here, too, multilateral institutions are critical players. When financial or technical support is transferred to the typically weak environmental agencies, this process has the potential to alter the context within which environ-

mental policy-making occurs at the domestic level. As Liberatore points out, the European Union became increasingly important in the making of environmental policy in the European states by redistributing funding and offering technical assistance. In China, the World Bank and Asian Development Bank empowered environmental protection advocates during the global climate change negotiations. Although in this case, the effects were limited in terms of policy outcome on the issue of global climate change, the potential longer-term ramifications for the National Environmental Protection Agency's ability to influence policy were substantial.

The internationalization of environmental politics has also altered more fundamental elements of states through the creation of new institutions and the support of traditionally weak societal groups. In states where voices calling for environmental protection are weak, it is often not until linkages force changes in institutional structures or successfully encourage new ways of viewing environmental problems that domestic policy change is possible. Economy's chapter illustrates how the international negotiations leading up to the climate change convention engendered a dramatic increase in information flows both between international and domestic actors and among domestic actors themselves. These types of changes have the potential to alter radically the context within which environmental policy-making occurs at the domestic level. Within China we see that international organizations and bilateral aid programs are empowering environmental protection advocates in a state that is still heavily focused on rapid economic development. In Zimbabwe, weak domestic actors have used international linkages to validate their policy preferences and gain in political stature. For example, Campfire, an NGO based on the principle of fostering sustainable use of wildlife, has gained influence through the CITES negotiations; and the European Union is using international environmental negotiations as a means to strengthen its position as an independent actor.

Importantly, different coalitions of actors linking the international and domestic levels are important at different times and in different ways. International epistemic communities and international institutions contribute foremost to setting the agenda for international scientific discussions and domestic research agendas. As the chapter by Raustiala points out, the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN) and WorldWide Fund for Nature (WWF) were key actors in identifying biodiversity as an issue of international concern,

defining the scope of the problem, and presenting it to domestic audiences in the United States and United Kingdom. International epistemic communities may play a particularly important role in those countries where scientific research of an environmental problem is still at a nascent stage. As Economy notes in her case study, at the time of the international negotiations on climate change, the Chinese had only a very limited research effort underway. Representatives of the international scientific community, most notably from the United States, initiated the Chinese research process by contacting energy specialists in China, bringing them to the United States for training, and supporting their efforts to gain international funding to estimate levels of Chinese CO_2 production. Still, in the end they were not very effective in using these tools to alter policy outcome in China. The same was true in Japan in the stratospheric ozone depletion case. The United States initiated a scientific exchange with Japan in an effort to win Japanese support for the Montreal Protocol. In this case, Japan's position changed.

The impact of epistemic communities is sharply limited by the fact that different actors and issues come into play during the scientific and political portions of the negotiations. Even when there is a relatively strong scientific consensus, as in the case of the Montreal Protocol, the key issues that emerge in the actual treaty negotiations do not hinge on the science of the issue as portrayed by the epistemic community but rather on political concerns such as the financial mechanisms to support implementation of the treaties, technology transfer, and intellectual property rights raised by domestic interests. As Kauffman notes, "while science can be used to justify political positions, national preferences for regulation are determined by commercial and political interests." Raustiala too discovered that epistemic communities are most crucial in the initial stages of negotiation when agendas are being established. In terms of achieving international accord on a treaty, however, the political issues remain relatively uninfluenced by scientific considerations. Instead, domestic political and economic institutions determine actors' perceptions and interests. In the biodiversity case, a community of experts was important in getting states to enter into regime negotiations, but the community played little role in actually shaping the debate around critical issues of the convention. Rather, policy choice was driven by domestic political and economic factors. United States pharmaceutical firms fearing the effects of regulations on their activities proved cautious about the ambiguous language of the accord. British firms that faced a different regulatory structure than that in the United